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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the rhetorical message of Garner Ted Armstrong, leader of the World Church of God, and attempts to explain his church's financial success and audience appeal in terms of this broadcast message. Each message is specifically organized to deceive the audience through the following strategy: (1) gain attention by using shock statements or by arousing guilt; (2) create an image of suspense or intrigue; (3) hold audience interest by appearing knowledgeable; (4) convince the listener that the answers for all questions can be found in the Bible; (5) move the listener to action by offering specific literature that has these Biblical answers. The article states that Armstrong's overt and purposeful declaration of an objective and rational approach, while actually engaging in a subjective and emotional address, is unethical, but responsible for his overwhelming success. Quotations from Armstrong's broadcasts and annotated footnotes are included. (MAI)

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GARNER TED ARMSTRONG: THE GUILE THAT BEGETS

by

Richard L. Weaver, II

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The Worldwide Church of God (WCOG) and its associated Ambassador College had an income of $53 million in 1973--several times that received by the evangelistic association of Billy Graham. The WCOG's daily radio and television programs, called "The World Tommorrow," are said to be the most widely broadcast religious programs in the nation.[1] They are carried on 314 stations.[2] In addition, the WCOG has a 2.6 million-circulation monthly Plain Truth magazine,[3] and numerous other publications furnished by its large printing facility in Pasadena, California. Garner Ted Armstrong and his father, Herbert W. Armstrong, are "the watchful guardians"[4] of this religious empire.

This article will treat the public message that is delivered to millions of people daily through Garner Ted Armstrong's radio and television broadcasts and the guile in those broadcasts that begets both attention and support. Guile involves actions by people that appear to be something they are not--messages delivered by personalities, for example, that appear to be informative or persuasive but which are designed explicitly and forthrightly for purposes other than the obvious ones. It is the contention of the author that the attention and support the Armstrongs have received is based upon the practice of deceiving listeners through well-designed strategems. The attention and support received can be verified through the numbers of people involved.

Although the sect has only 85,000 churchgoers and an additional 125,000 or more co-workers[5] in the United States and abroad,[6] it is estimated that 150,000,000 people are reached by radio, television and large-space advertising in mass-circulation magazines and newspapers.[7] The Los Angeles Times, in a news story, cited some figures contained in a

statement by Garner Ted Armstrong which appeared in a WCOG year-end report. It stated that in 1973, "3.6 million pieces of mail were processed at Pasadena alone--a 57% increase over 1972." It was also stated that "more than 750,000 persons wrote in for literature for the first time in 1973, and that 7 million pieces of literature were sent out to persons requesting it."[8]

The crux of the operation involves creating a desire in the listener for more information. Without a specific physical act on the part of the listener--an oral or written request--no information is forwarded. Thus, to understand the operation one must look at the radio and television presentations--the ideas, the organization, the types of proof, the style, and the method of delivery.[9] Each aspect of the presentation contributes to the total effect; although some guile can be found in each part of the presentation, it is the gestalt that provides the impression and evokes a response in the listener.

The ideas that are espoused during the broadcasts are only extensions and applications of the basic doctrines of the WCOG, seldom the basic doctrines themselves. The doctrines of Armstrong's theology, briefly, are that (1) there is only one true Church--the Worldwide Church of God; (2) there is only one true interpreter of Scripture--Herbert W. Armstrong; (3) there is only one acceptable day of worship--the seventh day; (4) there is only one valid means of induction into God's Kingdom---immersion baptism administered by a minister of the Worldwide Church of God; (5) the Trinity doctrine is heretical; (6) the "new birth" relates to the new life as spirit beings into which God's children are born (begotten) through resurrection; (7) the immortality of the soul is a false doctrine because man does not have a soul--he <u>is</u> a soul; (8) there will be three resurrec-

tions: (a) the resurrection of the faithful who will reign with Christ in his Jerusalem-based millennial kingdom; (b) the resurrection of 'the vast blinded majority, who never really had a chance to accept God's way of life'; and (c) the final resurrection, when the wicked will be raised, judged, and consigned to destruction in the lake of fire. There is no hell; (9) salvation is the process contingent upon lifelong compliance with God's ritual and more requirements; and (10) scripture passages must be taken literally.[10]

These doctrines are not revealed in the public speeches, but only through a close and extensive examination of the WCOG literature[11] or through acceptance into the church as a member[12] and then through a combination of the sermons, the literature, ministerial guidance and Bible study. Meetings are designed to provide information "above and beyond anything we're free to say on television, over the radio, or in our magazines,"[13] Armstrong contends. It is impossible for a person listening to Garner Ted Armstrong on "The World Tomorrow" program to understand these doctrines, for the message that is conveyed via the media is designed, through ingeniousness and expert ability to induce only a state of curiosity in the listener. It raises questions in the listener's mind and whets his appetite. In listening to the broadcasts one gets only a faint shadow of the doctrinal issues. The message, then, illustrates the "seduction metaphor" in which Armstrong, the seducer, "foists appearances on the unwary." As Plato had Phaedrus say about the shams of the would-be orator, "It is from what seems to be true that persuasion comes, not from the real truth."[14] It is the concealment of truth for the purpose of misleading.

In his broadcasts, Armstrong's orientation seems to be, in his own words, to "shock the socks off the most time-honored traditions you maybe have always clutched and held dear to your breast in this modern world of prophessing Christianity."[15] One can expect to hear material on the ten commandments, the coming Kingdom of God, pagan holidays, Biblical creation, the day of crucifixion or evolution but not as one would expect to hear it. On a recent program, Garner Ted Armstrong talked about Jesus Christ in these words:

> There is vast confusion, . . . about the entire lifespan of Jesus, about the date of his birth, about how he called his disciples, about why he came, about what he did, about whether his miracles are true, about the kind of personality he was--what race he was of, what he looked like, the length of his hair--everything in short, about the life, the ministry, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (March 20, 1974)

Shocking the public is a means of gaining and holding attention. People want to have their senses assaulted and the Armstrongs, rather than using their position for responsible and informative journalism or religion, cater to this desire.

In his broadcasts, Armstrong supports "the old-fashioned Christian and American virtues of honor, reverence, patriotism, thrift, integrity, chastity, and temperance."[16] Like most of the past religious reformers, Garner Ted strikes out against "the fat, the dirty, the corrupt, the sinful, and the unbelieving." He wages war against "all that is not pure, noble, true, just, and American." His "anti-socialist, anti-Communist, anti-intellectual, anti-hippy, anti-Catholic, anti-German, even anti-bigot"[17] ideas seem to strike a responsive chord in some listeners.

The idea that the WCOG knows the truth and that it is, thus, superior to other churches, is attractive to listeners. "Prove for yourself that what we say is true--its easy, afterall," Garner Ted seems to be saying, "and then join us in a united, warm, friendly front, against the 'cold, sinister, heathen, unscrutable, even ineffable enemies.'"[18] It is the team approach where the position of the team on first principles has been established and all members are obliged to follow without question, doubt, or denial. The team has the character of a secret society; the audience may appreciate that all members of the team are held together by a bond, but no member of the audience shares this bond unless he is a member. Intrigue is created; listeners want to know the secrets and are, thus, persuaded to seek for the answers. They respond because they do not have the information, rather than responding in an informed, rational manner to the information they receive. Their only source for answers to the questions raised, however, is the Armstrong organization itself.

The substance of the ideas developed in each program produces a feeling of being wafted toward "the good life," a feeling that results, in part, from the arrangement of the ideas. Listeners can see that there is a light at the end of life's gloomy tunnel, a light for which desire is created by Armstrong and a light which is then supplied by Armstrong. Each broadcast is specifically organized; some appear to be more spontaneous than others and in such cases, the scheme is not as tight. It seems that the principles of an effective advertisement learned by Herbert Armstrong in 1912 have been passed along to his son. The material of the broadcast is designed to (1) gain attention, (2) create suspense, (3) hold interest, (4) arouse desire, (5) convince the auditor, and (6) move him to action.[19]

The mold these characteristics are fitted into is an adapted Monroe motivated sequence.[20] He begins by gaining attention, then establishes a need. Satisfaction of the need follows and the visualization step is often developed concurrently. In climactic fashion, he then moves the listener toward performing some specific action--an action designed to move the listener closer to "the good life."

Armstrong begins each program dynamically, reaching out and grasping the attention of the listener:

> . . . as you look around the world today at the unbelievable morass of confusion--nations and governments toppling, the energy crisis, economic crises, crises in the weather, national calamities and disasters, the problems of the world's biggest Christian nation--the United States of America--it is also a nation in a confusion and a crisis of leadership; the credibility gap, doubt, dismay, perplexity and bewilderment on the part of the private sector in disputes over leadership and government, you have to ask if all of this the world over represents God's best efforts to get the world saved--then, God must be in trouble. (March 22, 1974)

He may begin the program with a provoking question, with a shocking statement, or with a meaningful example. In all cases, it is an opening that appears well-planned to focus the listener's mind on the broadcast.

Following a strong attention-getter, Armstrong creates a clear and evident need. This need, very often, relates to what is happening in the world today. It involves the need for the future salvation of the human race, relates to world peace, and often includes, too, solving the huge problems of all of human kind. Armstrong is also concerned about a need that is generated when the almighty dollar takes the place of Almighty God.

The need to save the world for a healing of the spirit, to find out what we are and who we are and why we are here and where we are going, all form part of the need step, a need step based on the listener's unfortunate circumstances.

The satisfaction of the need relates to the Bible and to God. The two, of course, are closely related for only in the Bible is God's design revealed. As Armstrong states, "there is a design eventually that He has in mind, so enormously greater than anything that we are or can imagine we can be that it really boggles your mind." (March 22, 1974) The Bible, Garner Ted feels, deals with the suffering of all of human kind; it talks about wars and an end to war, about the rehabilitation of the whole surface of the earth, agrarian reform, linguistic reform, and governmental reform. Thus, the Bible, it would appear, is the means of satisfying the need. But it is not the Bible or Jesus Christ alone that is the answer. "We have identified the enemy and he is us," he would say. "We must change our ways: 'Repent and be baptized and you shall receive the holy spirit.'" The visualization step, then, becomes an intimate part of the satisfaction step for the immediate results of repenting, baptism, and receiving the holy spirit is for us to lead the world. ". . . we could be number one," Armstrong says, "we could show the world how to live, we could get rid of divorce, get rid of crime, get rid of corruption, chicanery in government, confusion of every sort, every evil work--and the key is right in the Bible"--but we must seek Jesus Christ," he would add, "for only through Him can we repent. To satisfy all of the needs of this world," according to Garner Ted, simply "look into the Bible and see what it says and get about the business of believing it and obeying what it says." (March 22, 1974)

Armstrong's truncated motivated sequence simply enmeshes the satisfaction step with some visualization; generally, he moves from the satisfaction step directly into the final part--the action step:

> I've got a couple of booklets here I want to tell you about, before I've got to quit, so this booklet What Is the True Gospel shows you where to look in your own Bible to answer every single one of these questions I have asked. . . . (March 22, 1974)

The action step skillfully channels the listener's attention to an effective outlet for satisfying his desire for more information. Armstrong structures each broadcast to climax with the offering of specific literature. On each program, a number of pamphlets are advertised and copies of the literature--some only several pages in length and others over three-hundred pages[21]--are available, and are advertised, "free of charge." The need for this literature is well supported since, according to the message, it contains "the answers." Beguiled by the lack of information in the program, listeners respond to fill the void created through skillful strategms.

The action step, however, is often weak--as presented by Armstrong. There are two reasons for this. First, Armstrong often develops a topic over a series of broadcasts; thus, at the end of any one of them, he might just have time to quickly advertise a relevant booklet and state the main thesis of the next program. Secondly, the specific action statement that would most appropriately draw together the elements and provide the outlet for gaining further information has, for the most part, been presented throughout the program via powerful, lively, interesting commercials of professional quality. Mood music is introduced, then an announcer with a strong masculine voice sets the stage, sometimes asks a relevant question, and then tells you how you can find more information or the answer to the

question posed without price or obligation, through reading a particular booklet. Following this minute commercial, the music stops and the voice clearly and precisely says, "For your free copy, call Ambassador College toll free: 800-423-4444--that's 800-423-4444."

The form of Armstrong's message is deductive. Because he believes that answers to all the major problems of today's world can be found in the scriptures, his presentations are collections of reasons--appeals to understanding. The listener may be deceived by the rationality of the approach and fail to perceive the underlying large doses of emotion. It is the reason-emotion dichotomy in the context of guile. Following the general thesis, he will work through several types of argumentative proof such as explanation, authority, generalization, analogy, example, and cause to effect to prove his point. In many instances, his success depends upon the establishment of an appearance of knowledgeability. Listeners are barraged by overwhelming, but biased, evidence. In other cases he depends upon sensationalism--startling impressions.[22]

As an instrument of proof, explanation is used throughout each broadcast. Here, Armstrong's primary purpose is to explain the development of a thesis or to elucidate the Biblical text. He uses explanation to develop unimportant as well as important ideas, obvious ideas as well as those more obscure, and he uses it to provide background knowledge, contextual information, word etymology, and relationships between ideas. His dependence on explanation is consistent with the approach revealed in WCOG booklets and brochures. He described one of them in a broadcast, saying it was "an obvious, easy, simple, plain, straight-from-the-shoulder, rational, explanation. It is not deep and technical and scientific; it's not over anybody's head." (April 4, 1974) Explanation is easy for Armstrong to use since

church bias can be incorporated. It is easy for the listener to accept since it comes from a source who appears knowledgeable.

He also depends on authority; most often he cites the Bible. Whether he cites a specific reference, a general reference, or whether he paraphrases it, his intention appears to be to have his listeners read it, as he reveals in the following statement: "It is simple; you don't need to know Greek; you don't need to know Hebrew; you don't need to go to school; you don't need to go to a certain Church; you don't need someone to come in and show you a lot of funny signs; you don't need to stand in a particular position--one foot in the ground, one leg in the air, hold your hand up, cross your eyes, do anything--just read it." (March 19, 1974)

In addition to using the Bible, however, Garner Ted also draws together information from a large variety of other sources--often highly reputable and sometimes well-known--using a similar pattern each time he does this. In talking about evolution, Armstrong said: "Karl Dunbar, in a book called Historical Geology states, and I quote, 'The study of embryology and comparative anatomy provides only circumstantial evidence,' his words not mine, of evolution.'" (March 27, 1974) He also uses dictionaries and encyclopedias--especially Britannica and Americana. The objective is to appear both well-read and well-documented and it is achieved. His use of authority is especially overwhelming to the doctrinally-naive person, because in addition to citing many sources Armstrong's skillful explanation of the meaning of those sources is at first sight impressive and thorough. In this way, too, he creates an impression of knowledgeability.

Armstrong is also prone to using generalization. He enjoys the short startling generality that moves quickly to a climax, catches the listener unaware and then avariciously grasps his senses: "We live in a world that is

just like a giant bomb with a short fuse and somebody has already struck the match." (March 22, 1974) Or he might say, "Let's not claim we're number one in Christianity when we lead the world in crime, lead the world in divorce, lead the world in our hideous misuse and abuse of the land on which we live." (March 24, 1974) He will often use a generalization to summarize a category of knowledge before further explanation: ". . . there are certain laws which enforce themselves upon science and over which science has no control. . . ." (March 23, 1974) The broad, sweeping generalization that the listener must accept on faith, or prove by reading the Bible word-for-word, is also used: "God doesn't say, 'You must accept I exist on faith.' There is no such scripture in the entirety of the Bible." (March 23, 1974) He also uses the generalization, at times, to synthesize the ideas of a broadcast, or the ideas at a particular step in his attempt to reach closure on a thesis. Once an impression of knowledgeability is established, generalizations of any type assume greater credibility, and the listener is more easily swayed by them.

Armstrong regards the use of analogy as a strong method of proof as well: "It is good, perhaps, to use analogies," he said, "I use analogies continually, trying to prove a certain point or to illustrate a lesson, or to get some point across I am talking about. . . ." (March 25, 1974) In one broadcast he talked about the people of Mexico, Central and South America. He said those people, in his words:

> have talked about the giant or the Colossus to the north and they have given the analogy like the elephant and the mouse that share the same cage and we, of course, are the elephant and they, of course, are the mouse. And there's just a limited little bit of space here and the elephant sneezes and the mouse gets blown around the room.

> And the elephant moves his foot and the mouse is in terror running around wondering where to stand, or where to sit, or where to lie down next. (March 24, 1974)

With the impression of knowledgeability secure, almost any similarity between unlike things sounds logical, and will generally go unquestioned by the listener.

Examples are frequently used as Armstrong draws from the Bible, from the experiences of others, and from current events and politics. He knows their value in holding attention. He also creates hypothetical examples to illustrate points. He used the problems of the Nixon administration and the then impending possibility of impeachment to support the statement, "This world is in a crisis of government." He cited the Catholic Church to represent "the pyramid form of government." He provided the Garden of Eden as an example of a situation where God was the ruler, the landowner, the Person in charge. Examples, especially those drawn from current events, aid in maintaining his <u>appearance</u> of knowledgeability. Considering the perceived knowledgeable base from which such examples emanate, they carry more than their share of the logical support of Armstrong's presentation.

Another mode of proof Armstrong uses is cause-effect. Sometimes it is brief, at other times extensive. Most use of cause-effect revolves around the premise: because of man's human nature, we are in trouble: "We own half of the world's automobiles and choke in the smog as a result of it," (March 24, 1974) is an example of the short version. The more extensive--although not as extended as some instances: "We're the biggest country the world has ever seen in some ways. What we do when we cough causes people around the world to catch a cold. We move a little bit and

other nations nearly topple. We have a little domestic crisis that might affect the cotton industry or the petro-chemical industry, the automobile industry, and other countries have national calamities." (March 24, 1974) Again, just as in his use of generalization, he prefers to use cause-effect for its shock value, as a sensationalistic device. It is often how he uses his material that creates the guile. "Shocking the socks off the public" should not be the role of responsible persuaders in our society.

Many of Armstrong's statements are received as motivational by some listeners because they touch them where they are. He appeals to their desire for happiness and to their fears. In treating happiness, he uses reverse psychology, mentioning the world's problems and how there is hope for survival and true happiness. Supporting the prophecy that ". . . all these blessings shall come on you and overtake you . . . blessed shall you be in the city," Armstrong mentions a variety of cities around the United States and says, "I hate all of them . . . I don't know of a city where I can look at that city and say, 'Oh, isn't this city blessed?' . . . you know, I pity you poor people . . . you can't find cities in this wretched world of ours with their ugly old red-brick and brownstone apartments and ugly ramshackle old buildings decrepit inner-urban areas all falling into the ground whose old horrible tenement houses whose people have had to live in them. . . ." (March 29, 1974) His seemingly genuine and straightforward attacks on what he considers to be the deplorable conditions of our world also strike a responsive chord. The general tendency is to mention that which is negative, to develop it and to sensationalize it.

Appealing to fear is another sensational tactic that is beguiling. In one broadcast, Armstrong spoke of his listeners' "eyes liquefying, their bodies vaporizing and their cities vanishing in a nuclear holocaust." The

"end times," he warned, were near.[23] The words he chooses evoke fear. They are purposely designed to startle the listener. Garner Ted excuses this by saying, "I can't help it if God's word is shocking. . . ." (April 3, 1974) Characterizing war, he said it was a "Satanic, ugly, sinful, wretched, wicked, evil, rotten, abominable exercise of human beings killing each other." (March 19, 1974) "Wretched" is an overused word, used three times in a single minute at one point. Such words as "nightmarish madness," and "voracious devouring" also appear designed to evoke fear. In one program he talked of people "who are willing to rip and shred and bite and devour and claw one another over religious antagonisms." (March 22-29, 1974) Happiness is established as the state or condition that will replace fear as a positive reward for obeying God's word. Such sensational appeals to fear provoke uneasiness and cause some to seek panaceas. These are people who are unable to perceive any other remedy for their plight--the poor, the troubled, the disenchanted, and the worriers of any economic level.

Armstrong also develops ethical proof through his messages. Although he espouses the necessity for listeners to seek the affirmation of his ideas through Biblical support, asking them to do so is also a means of attaining intellectual integrity. That is, it adds to his credibility if he succeeds in convincing the audience that they will come to the same conclusions he does if they would take the time to investigate and prove his points. Ethical proof, once established, allows him latitude in using himself for examples, and his own word as the authority.

He develops the competency dimension of ethical proof when he uses his father, his own length of service to the Church, the amount of time given to the study of a problem, his offers to lecture around the world, or the actual presentations he has made to large bodies of people on different

topics. He also depends upon his contacts with "reputable" people to aid his ethical appeal. In addition, high visibility contributes to the competency dimension.

Another technique used in Armstrong's development of competency is the establishment of authority through superior knowledge. Concerning the existence of life on the moon, he once stated, "Maybe you can say I guessed right, but I knew there wasn't [life on the moon], and I'm not a scientist. I knew there wasn't. I knew there wasn't even a germ up there. . . ." (March 25, 1974) This seemed to place Garner Ted on a plain higher than the moon scientists who took elaborate precautions to protect the population of the earth from contamination by moon germs. He is forthright in his portrayal of himself as a superior human being. Even to one of the former ministers of the church he once replied that he was "special in the church . . . and . . . above criticism."[24]

Because his words and the proofs he uses can be verified in the Bible, according to him, and because the listener can attain verification by writing or telephoning, Armstrong's trustworthiness, the third dimension of ethos, is at least superficially developed.[25] The sincerity with which his message is conveyed adds to his apparent honesty. One can be easily taken in by the genuine, forthright, seemingly candid, hearty and earnest approach displayed. From all external appearances, his general reputation appears strong--invincible.

In addition, Garner Ted appears trustworthy by sustaining an air of objectivity about his mission. Again, quoting Armstrong:

> . . . So, we're going to give evolution a very fair shake in this short series of programs on the subject. First, we're going to briefly describe the evidence and objectively explain the interpretation of that evidence from the evolutionary point of view. Then we're

> going to carefully analyze the evidence and explain the Biblical point of view and finally let you decide for yourself just what that evidence shows. Oh, I may urge a certain conclusion, but I'm going to be just as objective as it's possible to be on the subject of evolution. (March 23, 1974)

Emphasis should be placed on the phrase, "Oh, I may urge a certain conclusion"; for it could more accurately be stated, "Yes, I will urge a certain conclusion." His objectivity aids in gaining trust, but, more importantly, it helps listeners accept the message. It is, however, asserted objectivity which rests, again, on the extent to which Armstrong has secured the impression of knowledgeability with his audience. It is objectivity as perceived from Armstrong's biased viewpoint alone.

Armstrong also appears trustworthy because he makes no pleas for money. The WCOG has always been a voluntary tithe-paying one, a belief supported by the scripture, "God has promised, scripturally, to prosper the tithe-payer."[26] The tithing system is spread over a period of years whereby most members give the WCOG 25 to 30 percent of their income to support both the church and the college.[27] In the broadcasts, then, Armstrong offers material with "no charge" and, thus, disarms the listener who would expect to pay for the magazines and booklets advertised. As one source admitted, "In an era of incessant financial appeals from scores of religious and charitable organizations, it is refreshing to find an operation that appears to be completely nonmercenary."[28] This serves to further convince the listener that Armstrong has nothing to gain from his [the listener's] request for further information; thus, why shouldn't Armstrong be as objective as possible? Once the listener has granted some credit to Garner Ted, then he [the listener], as in the case of any listener who has granted some credit

to an exhorter, "is committed to the easy extension and enhancement of that credit."[29] As Armstrong's ethos is strengthened, he then can develop convictions on his word alone "for he has become the agent of truth to his auditors and the validator of their emotions."[30]

The fourth and final dimension of his ethical appeal is dynamism. His message is molded "toward the non-church-going public--people who are not religious and may never attend church."[31] The audience also consists of confused believers or people who already accept the Bible as law, but who do not have a focused church allegiance. His "urbane professionalism" moves all but the well-informed and the very sophisticated to the edge of despair.[32] These are people who can appreciate it when he translates "carnal mind" to mean "meat head." (March 22, 1974) The analogies and comparisons are of the common variety and the Biblical quotations are cited with a forceful matter-of-factness. The message is understandable because it is colloquial, providing, it would seem, a clear example of lips that speak no guile[33]--rather than lips that give evidence of a con artist's craft.

Armstrong's language is characterized by qualities Edwin Black, in his book on Rhetorical Criticism, attributes to the rhetoric of exhortation. Exhortation, Black explains, is "that type of discourse in which the stirring of an audience's emotions is a primary persuasive force."[34] One of those qualities is the extensive use of concrete description. In one program Armstrong stated:

> So today we see the vaunted governmental policy of ABM (antiballistic missles) that cost billions of dollars, being scrapped and told now that American cities don't have any protection against international, intercontinental ballistic missles, and so we're going to spend additional billions and hundreds of billions eventually to mount a

completely indefensible, offensive system of IBM's. We can already kill every human being on more than 50 worlds like ours, but we're still building more and more and more to have this nightmarish madness of a nuclear deterrent absolute stalemate between these big powers that can't seem to live together in mutual harmony and peace. (March 22, 1974)

Concrete description is also noticeable in many of the other examples cited in this paper. Through it, Armstrong attempts to have the listener understand the severe problems of the world for the purpose of experiencing a strong affective response and, thus, stirring the emotions rather than the intellect.

His fast-moving, nervous, antagonistic, penetrating style is littered with vivid, readily understood cliches that can be easily retained. Expressions like, "America: love it or leave it," or "America: change it or lose it," "praise the Lord and pass the ammunition," "turn the other cheek," "love your enemies," "we have identified the enemy and he is us," and "there is nothing surer than death and taxes," are scattered throughout his broadcasts. The cliches, too, appear designed to add to the emotional fervor.

Because of his rate, his ability to emphasize and drive home his points, and his sense of timing, his delivery adds to the process of holding the listener's attention, facilitating the listener's comprehension, and making acceptance easier. Through Armstrong's delivery, the listener perceives a high state of excitement; he may listen at first to discover the reasons for the excitement. The rate, the intensity, and the pitch suggest something is wrong and as Edwin Black remarks ". . . we are alert to discover what, to learn if there is danger to ourselves."[35] It is the delivery of alarm and sensationalism.

Armstrong's effectiveness attributed directly to the success of the public-broadcast message can be measured, in part, by the growth of the entire WCOG enterprise. Founded in 1933 by Herbert W. Armstrong, the WCOG grew at a rate of 30% per year over the next 35 years.[36] It purchases the largest wattage of any radio program, worldwide--more than 50 million watts of power weekly reaching an estimated 100 million listeners.[37] Over eighty television stations carried the televised broadcasts in 1973. The circulation of The Plain Truth magazine climbed to over 3 million in 1973. Ambassador College comprised three campuses: one in Pasadena, one in Bricket Wood, England, and one in Big Sandy, Texas.[38] Also, since 1954, 604,576 students have enrolled in the WCOG monthly Bible correspondence course sent out to interested listeners.[39]

Armstrong's effect depends on a combination of factors. He reveals some sense of physical prowess, verbal facility, and popularity. Because he is related to the elder Armstrong he conveys some sense of "noble birth" and, too, admits to years of dedicated service. Add these factors to the unique blending of religious "evangelism" (the message), advertising (the mode), and the media (the medium) and one notes the potential for far more impressive results than realized thus far. In addition, Armstrong tries to provide the type of leadership "mature" men seek. Rather than being perceived as one who is strongly motivated by a lust for power, he prefers to be regarded like the professional guide in mountain climbing, "as superior in his knowledge and skill in reaching the top of a particular peak."[40]

The Armstrong crusade has proven that its method of providing "truth" can be successful. From an historical perspective, it can be judged successful by its rapid growth in size, numbers, and influence. From a monetary point of view, it can be judged successful by its annual income figures.

From an "awareness" perspective, it can be judged successful by simply how many people in the world recognize the existence of the crusade and the nature of the Armstrong message. From a "convert" standpoint, however, the movement is weak in comparison with other denominations--but still growing. This latter fact should not detract from the general importance of the crusade and the methods its leaders use to spread "the word."

The guile consists of the alluring exterior. The ideas espoused by Armstrong on the broadcasts are only faint shadows of the doctrines to which the WCOG ascribes. The climactical organizational scheme leads one to a single desirable outcome--writing for WCOG literature which tends to further beguile the reader. The impressive vocabulary used to evoke fear and promise happiness can easily dissuade and convince the doctrinally-naive person. Armstrong's overt and purposeful declaration of an objective and rational approach while engaged in a subjective and emotional address is also beguiling. The pounding, driving delivery reveals strength and sincerity, which, if taken at face value, without closely examining the ideas elaborated, can be convincing in and of itself. It is the sensationalism of religion. Man is "strongly disposed to accept convictions that will justify our having experienced vivid feelings."[41] How many people actually take the time to prove the ideas for themselves? Thus, Armstrong, the seducer, foists appearances on the unwary. As William G. Kelley, Jr., writing on "Rhetoric as Seduction," states, ". . . rhetoric understood as seduction is fakery of the worst sort. . . ."[42] To prevent oneself from being counted among the naive begotten requires an educated awareness, for Armstrong's is a guile that begets.

Footnotes

[1]"Sex, Money, Doctrine Cited: 6 Ministers Quit Armstrong Religious Sect," Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1974, p. 18.

[2]From a letter postmarked November 5, 1974, signed by Garner Ted Armstrong. Another source stated that the WCOG network included "70 TV, and over 400 radio stations," Al Stump, "Hanky-Panky and Revolt in the Worldwide Church of God," True, 55 (July 1974), 72.

[3]"Trouble in the Empire," Time, 103 (March 4, 1974), 50. Because of mounting costs, The Plain Truth magazine changed from a full-color glossy magazine format to a newspaper style in 1975.

[4]Time, 103 (March 4, 1974), 50.

[5]"Co-Workers" is the Armstrong term for those who undergird the work of the church by making monetary contributions. They are church members and other interested people who have contributed to the organization.

[6]Time, 103 (March 4, 1974), 50.

[7]This Is the Worldwide Church of God (Pasadena, California: Ambassador College Press, 1972), pp. 18-19. No claim is made by the author for the accuracy of these figures. The reader should recognize, however, that they are the figures that are available.

[8]Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1974, p. 19. Again, the author cannot vouch for the accuracy of the figures, however, it is clear a large number of people are affected in some capacity by the Armstrong organization.

[9]These concerns were selected because they are the factors that induce listeners to respond. They are the obvious manifestations of "power"--one persuasive force that creates a listener response.

[10]Joseph Martin Hopkins, "Jesus Chose Paul . . . ," Christianity Today, XVI (December 17, 1971), 8. The full title of the article is a 60-word quotation from Herbert W. Armstrong.

[11]The word "literature" refers to the material (magazines, pamphlets and booklets) provided by the WCOG.

[12]For specific information on how people become members and what membership in the Worldwide Church of God means, see William C. Martin, "The Plain Truth About the Armstrongs and The World Tomorrow," Harper's, 247 (July 1973), 74-82.

[13]Garner Ted Armstrong, quoted in James Morris, The Preachers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 361.

[14]Plato, Phaedrus, trans. W. C. Helmbold and W. G. Rabinowitz (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 260, p. 46 as cited in William G. Kelley, Jr., "Rhetoric As Seduction," Philosophy & Rhetoric, 6 (Spring 1973), 73. The proof for these conclusions is the author's listening to Armstrong programs over the course of a year. The conclusions are those of the author.

[15]Garner Ted Armstrong, April 3, 1974, Broadcast, WACE, Chicopee-Springfield, Massachusetts. Future references to broadcasts will be listed parenthetically within the text by date only. All are quotations from Garner Ted Armstrong broadcast over WACE, Chicopee-Springfield.

[16]Hopkins, Christianity Today, 7.

[17]Frederick Trautmann, "How The Truth Is Made Plain: The Armstrongs and The World Tomorrow," Today's Speech, 17 (November 1969), 42.

[18]Trautmann, 42.

[19]The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong (Pasadena, California: Ambassador College, 1967), I, 33-34, 65-68.

[20]See Alan H. Monroe and Douglas Ehninger, Principles and Types of Speech, Sixth Edition (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1967), p. 267.

[21]Some titles consist of a one or two page printed sheet. Others are booklets ranging in size from 23 pages (Which Day is the Sabbath of the New Testament, 1971), to 324 pages (God Speaks Out on 'The New Morality,' 1964). In the course of pursuing information over a three-year period, following most all suggestions provided via either the broadcasts, the course of study, the periodicals, or the actual published material itself (which always suggests other literature to send for), one could easily accumulate over 130 different titles--excluding the periodicals themselves--The Plain Truth, The Good News, and a newspaper intended for members only.

[22]This is the author's conclusion from sampling more than a year of Armstrong broadcasts.

[23]Time, 103 (March 4, 1974), 50.

[24]Stump, "Hanky-Panky," True, 72.

[25]The author uses the word "superficially" because a crack may have occurred in Garner Ted Armstrong's ethical facade by articles appearing in the media concerning possible past moral and ethical indescretions. See "Garner Ted Armstrong, Where Are You?" Time, 100 (May 15, 1972), 87; Time, 103 (March 4, 1974), 50; Los Angeles Times, February 24, 1974, pp. 18-19; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 25, 1974, p. 6A. Furthermore, recent controversies have occurred over the interpretation of scripture. A partial list of questions regarding doctrinal issues appeared in a letter to "friends and brethren" from Milo E. Wilcox, a minister who was terminated and disfellowshipped from the WCOG: (1) "Could there be something wrong with a church organizational structure which causes its members to slander and blaspheme the name of a marked person?" (2) "Could something be wrong with a system which allows one man to impose a Sunday Pentecost upon its members, bypassing its field of ministry and still withholding the proof?" (For the previous 40 years

the WCOG observed Pentecost on a Monday and had disfellowshipped members who had proven it should be on a Sunday.) (3) ". . . Could there be some problems with a church structure and its policies that have imposed the wrong application of scriptures to thousands of divorced and remarried people?" (4) Regarding Herbert W. Armstrong's use of the word "apostle" in referring to himself, ". . . doesn't God warn Christians that the time will come when men will claim to have the qualifications of an apostle?" (5) Regarding Herbert W. Armstrong's concealment "from the membership over a period of years the alleged [problem] of his son, Garner Ted Armstrong," the latter states, "Isn't there a great difference between being FORGIVEN for sins in the sight of God and Christians and being above reproach to them which [sic] are without the church?" (6) Could there be some problems with a church unwilling to remove a minister (Garner Ted Armstrong) when the Bible proves "that a minister must have a good report outside the church, as well as inside of it." (7) "Isn't there something wrong with a church government which compromises some of its members into poverty because they feel motivated . . . to pay three tithes?" (8) "Why doesn't the leadership of the WCOG apologize for the numerous errors in prophecy over the past 40 years?" (9) Why does the church continue to maintain the doctrine of "church eras" except to keep members from leaving the organization--since by leaving, the church maintains, they have no hope for salvation? (10) Why does Herbert W. Armstrong maintain the church as a government by dictatorship when New Testament Scriptures forbid it? (11) Why are members of the church told to accept everything they are told when God holds you accountable because you have His Word? From a letter dated March 29, 1974, signed by a terminated and disfellowshipped (Saturday, March 2, 1974) minister: Milo E. Wilcox, Rt. 1, Box 50, Windsor, CO 80550. Used with his permission. The dispute over these issues was never revealed in the broadcasts.

[26]This Is the Worldwide Church of God, p. 18.

[27]James E. Adams, "Pastor Here Resigns As Controversy Spreads In Worldwide Church Sect," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 25, 1974, p. 6A. Also see William C. Martin, "The Plain Truth About the Armstrongs and The World Tomorrow," Harper's, 247 (July 1973), 76. Martin states that tithing "may take as much as 40 to 50 per cent of a family's net income after taxes. . . ."

[28]Hopkins, Christianity Today, XVI (December 17, 1971), 8.

[29]Edwin Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study In Method (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 146.

[30]Black, p. 146.

[31]Morris, The Preachers, p. 333.

[32]Morris, p. 321.

[33]I Peter 3:10

[34]Black, p. 142.

[35]Black, p. 144.

[36]This Is the Worldwide Church of God, p. 3.

[37]"What Is the Worldwide Church of God?" The Good News, XXII (December 1973), 17.

[38]Recently, the Bricket Wood Campus was closed--financial reasons were cited as the cause. The other two campuses remain open.

[39]"Ambassador College Correspondence Course Begins Twentieth Year," The Good News, XXIII (January 1974), 15-16.

[40]Ordway Tead, The Art of Leadership (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1935), p. 269, as cited by Franklyn S. Haiman, "The Dynamics of Leadership," in Robert S. Cathcart and Larry A. Samovar, Small Group Communication: A Reader (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1970), p. 365.

[41]Black, p. 145.

[42]Kelley, p. 72.